

Another area of work where interesting discoveries can be made is in the cutting of turf both in the raised bogs common in the Midlands and the blanket bogs covering much upland terrain especially in the West. Toghers (wooden trackways across bogs) are the main monument type found in raised bogs but blanket bog can cover many types of monuments including megalithic tombs, cairns, stone circles, house sites and field walls. A massive Neolithic field system associated with a court-tomb and habitation sites was discovered in North Mayo during turf cutting.



A complex series of cropmarks showing in a field of corn in the townland of Bracklin, Co. Westmeath. Cropmarks result from buried features (such as ditches or wall foundations) causing differences in crop growth which may be visible from the air. Archaeological sites with no surface features can be detected in this way. (photo - L. Swan).



## Archaeological excavation

Modern archaeological excavation is a highly skilled activity requiring much expertise in the recovery of the evidence and in its interpretation and publication. Contrary to popular opinion archaeologists do not excavate in order to find gold or other valuable objects. Rather, their intention is to get the maximum information about the past from the ground. Objects found in an excavation are important principally because of their recorded association with other objects, structures, layers or features. For this reason it is important that unqualified persons should not undertake archaeological excavation and if by accident a discovery is made everything should be left as it is without any further uncovering of the object or feature or any other disturbance of the immediate area until an official inspection has been made.

The National Monuments Acts, makes it unlawful to excavate for archaeological purposes without a licence from the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. Their consent is also required to use a metal detector for the purpose of searching for archaeological objects. Such consents are normally issued to qualified and experience archaeologists